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# Christian Mysticism & Sufism: A Comparative Dissection

## Prayer of the Heart in Christian and Sufi Mysticism

When going into prayer, written in the book (researched in this first section) *Prayer of the Heart in Christian and Sufi Mysticism* by Sufi teacher Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, there is a 1) warmth of the heart; 2) a strange, holy energy; 3) a peace from thoughts; 4) a purging of the intellect; 5) possible visions of heavenly mysteries; 6) perhaps unheard-of light that is born from the ineffability; 7) the heart becomes illuminated; 8) and, lastly, access to perfection that is endless. This Great Beloved, what I term Divine-God-Spirit (DGS), is neither masculine nor feminine in mystic thought. "At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs only to God," which is not at *our* disposal, but which *God* disposes of into our lives, "which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our *own* mind," and brutalities of our own selves and the externalities. God is the One who permits the heart to shine.

Christian mysticism and Sufism are joined at the heart. "They are kindred pathways of transfigurations through love. Both traditions have an epitomized metaphor of 'a cosmic love song that begins in exile and ends in divine intimacy'" (Vaughan-Lee). The sublime One is missed when there is this "anguish of separation" with hopes of a radiating assurance of ecstatic reunion. "The notion that God is absent is the fundamental illusion of the human condition," writes Vaughan-Lee. Prayer is the pathway toward exposing that illusion and is itself a direct gateway to "'the great electromagnetic field of love.'"

*Dhikr* is the Sufi prayer of the heart, which we'll get to later in this paper. It overcomes egoic selfishness, to catapult us into the blue flame of pure self-oblation, where we miraculously are not destroyed but rather resurrected into true personhood. This kind of mystical embodiment is carried in the breath. "As we silently work upon ourselves, the energy of our devotion becomes a point of light within the world." It radiates and knocks people with warmth and purity.

> *Change the inner energy structure of the planet. In previous ages this energy structure was held by sacred places, stone circles, temples, and cathedrals. In the next stage of our collective evolution it is the hearts of individuals who will hold the cosmic note of the planet. This note can be recognized as a song of joy being born within the hearts of seekers. It is a quality of joy that is being infused into the world. It is the heartbeat of the world and needs to be heard in our cities and towns. (Vaughan-Lee)*

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"Prayer is born from need" (Vaughan-Lee)— from want, from suffering, from dark nights. "Prayer is a way to be with God" (Vaughan-Lee). It is a practice of contemplation—to be alone with God. And Sufism is a return to love through heart meditation (*murāqaba*) whereby this path of the love "is taken by love and longing back to the Beloved, from the experience of separation from God to the state of union within the heart" (Vaughan-Lee). The energies of love slow down the mind. It takes "empty receptivity," in which one waits. There needs to remain an "empty inner awareness;" merging more and more within, silently, love with the Beloved.

The Christian mystic Prayer of Quiet is when the "soul becomes infused with divine presence" (Vaughan-Lee). St. Teresa of Avila describes the PoQ as a spark; this is when "our faculties are absorbed in God, who works within us." Its main intention, notwithstanding other impacts, is to bring love to the lover and Beloved—and between the two. Father Thomas Keating says, "'Silence is the language God speaks.'" Further, "Listening itself is a form of prayer, in which our whole being is receptive" (Vaughan-Lee). This is *Being*.

Rūmī eloquently writes:

> *Make everything in you an ear, each atom of your being, and you will hear at every moment what the Source is whispering to you, just to you and for you, without any need for my words or anyone else's. You are—we all are—the beloved of the Beloved, and in every moment, in every event of your life, the Beloved is whispering to you exactly what you need to hear and know. Who can ever explain this miracle? It simply is. Listen and you will discover it every passing moment. Listen, and your whole life will become a conversation in thought and act between you and Him, directly, wordlessly, now and always.*

Prayer is attuning all of oneself—the ear of the heart and the inner listening of the soul. The contemplative spirit achieves "true and perfect mystical silence" in the "abyss of its own depths" which "teaches it the most perfect and exalted wisdom" (Vaughan-Lee). The call is to "inward solitude," and then God will speak to "the most secret and hidden part of the heart."

St. Teresa on prayer discusses voices heard in prayer: First: "'the sense of woe and authority which they bear.'"— Measure this. Second: the voice(s), message(s), will prompt "a great tranquility [that] dwells in the soul.'" There will be a peace of mind, body, Being. And lastly: these contents from the divine realm will not vanish from the mind, maybe ever. She says that, "'a genuine spiritual voice is so clear that the soul remembers every word.'" Another additional reason is that the voice comes unexpectedly and refers to things unimagined up until that point. And finally, it is a *hearing* of something, not a *composing* or *concocting* what the soul *wants to hear.* And it might just be one word. One will understand the word(s). It will be wholeheartedly digested. What we're talking about on the contrary is the ego, in which "subverts inner listening for its own purposes;" it seduces us. The voice of God/Spirit is thoroughly genuine. This puts oneself in accordance with The Will. There's a nourishing. There is the wisdom of humility. The advice or instructions are really never unbalanced in their power.

In Sufism, this kind of eventual knowing is "'impressed into the heart.'" This kind of spiritual companionship offers "infinite wonder;" like that of *manna* from heaven right to the center of our being.

In the words of St. Teresa of Avila:

> *Each day the soul wonders more, for she feels that they [the words] have never left her, and perceives quite clearly, in the way that I have described, that they are in the interior of her heart—in the most interior place of all and in its greatest depths. So although, not being a learned person, she cannot say how this is, she feels within her this Divine companionship.*

In my experience, and with mystical prayer, God uses words and/or symbols to be meditated on thereafter, gradually entering one's consciousness and subconsciousness. Some lovers may also hear music or smell fragrances that come from the garden of the heart, and that touches them in unexpected ways. The ego might be *a* voice, but that is of duality and not oneness. God will answer our prayers, but most—and many times—we can't see Him doing this and thereout. And this, all together, will allow us to no longer believe or not believe in God, but *know God*.

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St. Teresa of Avila describes prayer and meditation as the "door into the castle of the soul" (Vaughan-Lee). There are four stages of prayer: recollection, quiet, union, ecstasy. This will be broken down below.

"The first stage of prayer is the work of keeping our attention on God despite all the distractions of the world," pens Vaughan-Lee. It takes constant vigilance, and is like drawing water up from the well, laboriously. In part, the reason this is so is due to the senses and their distractive-nature. In this first stage, there is this "process of turning away from the world, the negation, in which the inner attention of the seeker is turned away from the outer world and the desires of the ego and back towards the Beloved" (Vaughan-Lee). We will most likely be "assailed by doubts and difficulties" in the battle with our own ego's effecting that this is a useless and waste-of-time quest. We are seeking out the invisible that demands sacrifice when the world has all of its immediate pleasures and attractions. The ego knows that its identity and autonomy are threatened, and so will use all of its skills to create every possible type of confusion and problem to deter us. The ego is right in the middle square of our consciousness. "The ego stands firmly between the seeker and the light that is hidden within" (Vaughan-Lee).

Farid ud-Din Attar's writes in his fable, *The Conference of the Birds*:

> *He who loves does not think about his own life; to love truly a man must forget about himself, be he ascetic or libertine. If your desires do not accord with your spirit, sacrifice them, and you will come to the end of your journey. If the body of desire obstructs the way, reject it; then fix your eyes in front and contemplate.*

Love is the desire of the heart that gives way to baring the ego's desires. "Love bears all things," wrote St. Paul. One has to cross the driest desert of the ego and the Self and stay true to one's quest. "St. Teresa says, describing the seeker in this state, 'For many days, he is conscious only of aridity, disgust, dislike.'" The Self *is* "the instinctual inner nobility of the human." There might be barrenness, but it is for *the* higher purpose.

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Here, after being intimately roped into love by the Beloved, we are left into a (the) dark night. We have to wait in absence. There can be times of "total despair," emptied from the "depths of the soul;" "the grip of the ego is shattered," and shattered again and shattered. We slowly "die to the world and each death is painful."

As I see it *for myself*:

*My spirituality is like a tide and waves on the clean waters to dead seas, as I go on into the worm-holes of this existence. I have come to oscillate—mind, spirit, being—between periods, or sections, or seasons, of intensity versus subdued sublimity; activity versus contemplative modes; expressive output/out-going as opposed to an intrinsic 'kept-ness'; voracious communicativeness to and from a quiet reticence; 'liberatedness' and restriction.*

*The former-to-latter (not 'former' as in 'first' or 'beginning'; and not 'latter' as in or 'coming-after' or 'secondary' in the realistic) is an organic mechanism of steady, necessary decline—a degeneration—then onto active dying then onto terminality… spiritually-speaking. After this 'being-death', what comes next is a regeneration of the cycle: that being conception to resurrection and rebirth to growth into full-blown assertion, implementation, and experimentation of the "Creative Truth," as Persian poet, mystic, and martyr, Al-Manṣūr al-Hallāj, said. This whole metamorphic phenomenon, that "I" experience, is termed bardo in Tibetan Buddhism. Swedish pop singer, Tove Lo, has a song I love, and she's getting at this truth of recurrence, or seasonality: "I'm in a cycle, swear this is different/".*

*Another way to explain this is, furthermore, through Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama's, life—pre-realization. To find his way, as we always are (present participle), he experienced both extremes: lavishness, luxury, and excess (for him, materially); and then deprivation, asceticism, and withdrawal. This, dynamically, created a balance. The Middle Way. Neither this… nor that. Both this… and that. It's a living training.*

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Sufi Manṣūr al-Hallāj, who we'll cover in great depth later, was deemed love's martyr, so much so that he said, "'Suffering is He Himself, whereas happiness comes from Him.'" Post-suffering, we earn a "glimpse of our real nature and of the infinite tenderness." Vaughan-Lee continues: "Prayer begins to be a living presence within us, rather than an effort of recollection. More and more we just want to rest deeply in the sweet stillness." His presence will thus return, replacing the dreading absence. Once this transpires, we will become "blind to the attractions of the world," and the ego will become flaky and insubstantial.

"Herein the soul begins to be recollected," St. Teresa writes on the Prayer of Quiet, "it is now touching the supernatural…it [loses] the desire of earthly things…" (Vaughan-Lee). This only happens from a complete kind of surrendering. Now, one can—figuratively—draw that water from the well with much less strain, which enables the soul to have some rest.

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Now in Union, the third level of prayer in St. Teresa's 'system' (so to speak), is when we offer our Self to our Beloved to be taken in the mystery of His love. And this is through grace, to be firm and clear. The heart "'waketh,'" as its termed in the Song of Solomon. This bliss, actually, has an erotic quality which we see in the poetry of the mystic, too. The lover is "impregnated by the Beloved." The lover's inward semblance is feminine. The surrender, aforementioned, here is akin to a state of abandonment; "belonging only to Him…eternally present." God speaks in an eloquent whispering. As perhaps evident, Union is an extension of the second, Prayer of Quiet. It's when one's inner and outer lives alloy. It leads to "active *and* contemplative life at once…[engaging in] works of charity" (Vaughan-Lee, emphasis added). Yet, those who arrive here are still not "wholly masters of themselves" (i.e. "not perfectly attentive") The lover is always "inwardly waiting, listening, our heart attuned to our Beloved;" consenting for the imprint from the Beloved.

> *"The work of the mystic is to live in the two worlds. However much we are engaged in the outer world, we remain inwardly in a state of prayer, resting in God. This practice of constant inner prayer is described in the Qur'an: 'Men whom neither business nor profit distract from the recollection of God.'" (Vaughan-Lee).*

The Sufi would say this as so: “Outwardly to be with the people, inwardly to be with God.” In sum, the lover is “inwardly vigilant” to the “needs of our Beloved.”

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Now, in the Ecstasy and final (fourth) stage of prayer, one’s attentiveness is “effortless,” according to St. John of the Cross. He says, “All these desires disquiet the soul and distract it from the peaceful quiet and sweet idleness of the contemplation which is being communicated to it.” The great Meister Eckhart describes “true spiritual poverty” whereby we have no desire at all, not even for God or His wishes. This meekness needs to “permeate our life” and be “the foundation of our consciousness.” Thus, the flowing stream of love with flow between our Creator and His creation—us.

On another note, we are conditioned to think God is *not us*: outside of the Self. Christ *did* say, “Ye are gods.” We go away from the present, time and time again. “But the prayer of the heart always returns us to the center of our soul and teaches us the truth of oneness.” One cannot have an ordinary mind, here: for the ordinary mind is linear and logical. If *not* so, we can enter through the doorway of states of “unknowingness:”

> *The will must be fully occupied in loving, but it does not understand how it loves; the understanding, if it understands, does not understand how it understands—at least, it can comprehend nothing of that it understands: it does not understand, as it seems to me, because as I said just now, this cannot be understood. I do not understand it at all myself. (Vaughan-Lee).*

As St. Teresa writes here, this is the quiddity of Ecstasy. We become utterly dissolved into God. There is no separate identity in this cumulative stage between Maker and made. And you are no longer a gardener, but “the Lord Himself, and ‘the rain comes down abundantly to soak and saturate the garden.’” It is a “merging *in* God” (emphasis added). Ravished by love, there *can be* seemingly endless moments of ecstasy that are felt throughout one’s whole being, both soul and body. Sometimes, there is “not even any consciousness. One just knows that one has been taken by love”—like a thief in the *dark* night.

As Attār writes:

> *I am in a tumult because what I have seen has happened to me in another body. While hearing nothing I have heard everything, while seeing nothing I have seen*

*everything…. What can be more puzzling than something which is neither revealed nor hidden?*

We see her that the lover and the Beloved are inseparable; in a word—absorption: "In the silent niche of the heart the lover experiences the truth that there is only one prayer that underlies all of creation—the prayer in which the Beloved is present, not as a personal God or Creator, but as something both inexpressible and intimate." And, "This primal awareness of the heart is the [grounding] of all prayer and all praise."

In the wonderful words of Rūmī:

*Become silent and go by way of silence toward nonexistence,*
*And when you become nonexistent you will be all praise and laud!*

Or, the highest contemplation—which:

*"hangeth all wholly in this darkness and in this cloud of unknowing; with a loving striving and a blind beholding unto the naked being of God Himself only" (Vaughan-Lee).*

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Another aspect of prayer is praying specific prayers, covered in Vaughan-Lee's third chapter. I will delve into the "Jesus Prayer" and the Sufi *dhikr*, which is the repetition a sacred word or phrase like 'Allāh.'

The Jesus Prayer is, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." It can be shortened, omitting the "Son of God"-piece; or expanded, by adding "a sinner" to finish it off. It can be excessed "free form," too. And it can be done walking or engaged in things, so that "no moment is wasted from spiritual practice." But it also can be more formalized, so that one's whole being and mind is zeroed-in.

The Sufi *dhikr* is always recited, technically-speaking. "*lā'ilāha'illā-llāh*" is the most common form which translates, 'There is no god but God.' They 'get-to-work-with' the said ninety-nine names of God; the most common being, 'Allāh.' The *dhikr* can be chanted in groups, with music and drums, producing a dynamic and intoxicating effect. It is encouraged to be repeated throughout the day, in addition to times of inner contemplation.

There is a story is Islam that the "twenty-four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word," and that word was 'Allāh!' When the *dhikr* is practiced incessantly, it becomes "imprinted

on [one's] soul…[and] penetrated [on one's heart and soul until one's] whole being [becomes] this word" (Vaughan-Lee). Moreover, the Sufi aspires to remember God at all times and in every moment. And this remembrance, reflects the "state of union with God." With this, there is the coming of God's voice responding at the heart center.

Orthodox Churches set out three outfits of prayer: oral; mind; heart. The latter is the 'goal,' if you will. It would be to enter into this "absolute center," descending from the intellect.

> *"It is only within the heart that the Invocation of the Name becomes fully alive, that the prayer of the pilgrim becomes the prayer of Another, the prayer of Jesus that is now awake within the heart." (V-L)*

When it is talked about to 'pray without ceasing,' what is meant is that sometimes it becomes automatic. And this only can occur *within the heart*. But it is through and because of the grace of God. It gets to a point where it's 'every cell of the body.' Saying: "First you do the *dhikr* and then the *dhikr* does you." It's our consciousness and unconsciousness.

An older Sufi story illustrates this delightfully:

> *Sahl said to one of his disciples: Strive to say continuously for one day: "O Allāh! O Allāh! O Allāh!" and do the same the next day and the day after that—until he became habituated to saying these words. Then he bade him to repeat them at night also, until they became so familiar that he uttered them even during his sleep. Then [Sahl] said, "Do not repeat them any more, but let all your faculties be engrossed in remembering God!" The disciple did this until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, ... a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood which trickled to the ground bore the legend, "Allāh! Allāh! Allāh!"*

And further on:

> *"Like a drop of ink that falls on blotting paper, the act of prayer should spread steadily outwards from the conscious and reasoning center of the brain until it embraces every part of ourselves." (V-L)*

Our whole being is "infused with the energy of the name." "Spiritual life means learning to become one-pointed, to focus all our energy in one direction, towards the One" (Vaughan-Lee).

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"The mystic knows that what really matters is the inner connection of the heart in which our heart opens and cries." The grooves of our mental conditioning gets reworked through prayer. The new, *single* groove of the Divine; *is the Divine*. Quoting Theophan the Recluse: "'To stop the constant jostling of your thoughts, you must bind the mind with one thought, or the thought of One only.'" The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, talks of a polish. God is the agent of all inner transformation. It likens itself to an "inner alchemical process." The "center of divine consciousness within us works in the unconscious, disentangling and freeing us from complexes and patterns of conditioning" (Vaughan-Lee). Christ said at the Last Supper, "'Whatever you shall ask the Father in my Name, He will give it to you.'" And the Christian Lord's Prayer has thus: "Hallowed be Thy Name."

And then there's the breath, "Breathing is the most primal rhythm of our life" Naqshbandi Sufis teach: "'The more that one is able to be conscious of one's breathing, the stronger is one's inner life.'" The breath affects the bloodstream, psyche, and—believe it or not—our whole existence. They also teach that "the soul comes into the body with every out-breath," and on the in-breath is goes back to its spiritual dimension.

Translation, God comes and returns with each breathing cycle. The Naqshbandi also focus on the emptiness or nothingness of God. 'Allāh' can actually be translated as 'the…nothing'—'Al…lāh.' The world of the forms to the world of the formless. There can be moments of bliss at the finality of every in-breath. "The breath is the bridge between the outer physical world and the inner world of the soul" (Vaughan-Lee). In short, it's a journey into the world and back to the Lord: "offering our self to the mystery of life and its all-embracing relationship to God." The Sufi's say: "'Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God.'" (The Sufis are said to be "branded by love"; or, sternly: "the slaves of God.")

## "Manṣūr Al-Ḥallāj and the Poetry of Ecstasy."

Mystic-poets have ventured to "express the inexpressible," "speak the unspeakable;" a creation to a negation, a fulfillment to a annulation, a tool and an obstacle. The seeming "crisis of language" when encircling the ineffable has been a gateway, an escape, into ecstasy for the great

mystics. This can reach a zenith of total communion with the Divine, only preceded by a "total erasure of identity," or self. The Beloved is the catalyst for this ecstasy and higher-tier spiritual process/practice. In absolute union, one can become speechless, plunging "into the innermost self." As it's written: "Sufism has consistently produced a tremendous body of systematic mystical writings—poetry and poetic aphorism…" One of those Sūfī's is Manṣūr al-Hallāj.

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But before we get into that, let's talk some background and references. Søren Kierkegaard came up with this concept of Faith: the "total, existential resting of the individual in God through deliberate movement towards the absurd (i.e. the non-rational, the non-linguistic) …" (Selim 27). An example of this is Abraham (Ibrahim) absolutely giving up "Issac to God (through a movement of infinite resignation) and yet had absolute faith (by virtue of the absurd) that God would not require this sacrifice of him." This isn't mystical, per se—but, mystical methodologically.

Continuing: The individual here is "outside the universal (ethical, that is), existing within himself and in God simultaneously (which is the movement of Faith)." The Knight of Faith (Ibrahim) cannot be understood… logically. Kierkegaard says, "the human race rounds itself off as a perfect self-contained sphere…" (Selim 27). Simply, Ibrahim "suspends the ethical altogether."

> *"The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. The single individual qualified as immediate, sensate, psychical, is the hidden. Thus his ethical task is to work himself out of his hiddenness and to become disclosed in the universal. Everytime he desires to remain in the hidden, he trespasses and is immersed in spiritual trial from which he can emerge only by disclosing himself." (Selim 28)*

Faith is only "indirectly approachable intellectually and linguistically through stylistic approximation of its movements" (Selim 28). Interplay with opposites and circular dialect can only get at the sine pro quo of this.

Now with Friedrich Nietzsche: "Apollo is the god of light, of synthetic knowledge, of order and beauty" (Selim 29). The veil of maya separates and shields one from the intimidating primordial Oneness of Being. One wants to remain in the realm of the ethical with Apollo. But

Dionysus is the god of "the mysteries of Being, of intoxication and ecstasy" (Selim 29). Dionysian esoteric "primordial unity" approaches with vigor through the veil.

> *"The Dionysian ecstasy, which is for Nietzsche the most fundamental form of communion with the Divine, is a negation of the individual (contrary to the Kierkegaardian formulation) and an affirmation of the Oneness of Being." (Selim 29)*

The throes of ecstasy obstructs the individual from experiencing himself as himself. One goes to the Divine, alone; conjoining *into* Him with Perfect Unity. This is the dissolving of the Ego. It is "divine intoxication," a prerequisite to "Dionysian expression or utterance." "He ceases to be an artist and becomes a work of art." The Apollonian viewpoint sees Dionysian ecstasy as "fundamentally transgressive in its chaotic excess, in its erasure of identity." It is, from the Apollonian, existentially anarchic; without the universal/ethic; because Dionysus nullifies it. The Dionysian loses himself in God, in "the land of Silence" (Selim 30).

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> *The central doctrine of Sufism is wahdat al-wujzid, the "oneness of being." This derived directly from the shahdda, which is understood not only as "there is no god but God" but also as "there is no reality except Reality."*

In contrast to the pantheistic Nietzschean model, "Sufism posits God as the source of all being" (Selim 30).

> *"God is the One Real Being which underlies all phenomena ... if nothing except God exists, then the whole universe, including man, is essentially one with God, whether it is regarded as an emanation which proceeds from him, without impairing his unity, like sunbeams from the sun, or whether it is conceived as a mirror in which the divine attributes are reflected."*
>
> *"Sūfī path of union with God are those of the gnostic ('ārif) who, through an act of divine grace, is permitted to contemplate God's attributes with his heart and the gnostic who achieves the*
> *supreme state of annihilation in the divine essence which is commonly termed fanā' fī baqā' and which al-Niffari calls al-waqfah.*

The saints of Sufism are decreed such.

There are two kinds of contemplative states: perfect faith, or rapturous love—in which, here, one's "whole being is absorbed in the thought of his Beloved and he sees nothing else" (Selim 31). The "I", both, being in absolute reaction to the Divine, in these two levels of

union can relate to Kierkegaard's model. *'ārif* holds onto the individuality aspect. He knows himself as he is an actor of contemplation. He has "not yet been subsumed and extinguished in the supreme Reality of the divine essence" (Selim 31). Subject, "I", object, God. But in *wāqif*, "the 'I' ceases to exist and all that remains is God. A total identification…" What equates is an inability to produce speech. The *wāqif* "... does not pray. Prayer is from man to God, but in *waqfāt* there is nothing but God" (Selim 31).

The poet's creations that are in a conventional secular form, imbuing mystic symbolism, would be categorized as the allegorical. Sufi poets invented this style of poetry to *mask* the mysteries. Moreover, they invented this style because "there is no other way of interpreting mystical experience." There's an inexpressibility to an imposing relationship with the Divine-Beloved. This could've occurred insofar as the radical Sūfī wanted to reconcile with the more orthodox tradition.

> *"Since desire and intoxication are the two dominant features of the gnostic's experience of the Divine, then love poetry and wine poetry are the perfect vehicles for mystical symbolism." (Silem 33)*
>
> *"…cryptic prose that is full of paradox, negative statements and sentence reversals, thereby approximating stylistically (in the Kierkegaardian sense) the mysterious and impenetrable state of mystical union." (Silem 33)*
>
> *Wāqif* translates to "stayer"; while the very closely related *waqfah* means "staying."
>
> - The waqif is god-like because there is nothing in the waqfah but God. The waqif ceases to exist as an individual and is transformed by the divine essence into divine essence:
> - In staying there is neither establishment, nor annihilation, nor speech, nor act, nor knowledge, nor ignorance. (Silem 34)

As we much on to al-Hallāj, I need to point out that "the annihilation of the intentionality of individuality in the waqfah." Further, "The actions, intentions, desires of the gnostic must be utterly relinquished before total union can be attained."

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> *Al-Hallāj's ultimate sin against both the orthodox community and the Sūfī brotherhoods was that he systematically dared to speak what must not be spoken. Having reached the last stage of the mystical path-that of final union with the Divine Essence-he was not content with silence but sought to express this ultimate*

> *mystery in the impassioned, transgressive language that Islam has never forgotten. (35)*

Al-Hallāj was denounced routinely as a "heretic and a false prophet, composer of a new Qur'ān…a flagrant usurper." (36).

> *In the Hallājian formulation, once union with the Divine is achieved the individual soul is annihilated and only the Divine Essence remains but this must not be revealed in direct speech at any cost for it violates the principle of the shahddah and is interpreted by the orthodox community (as well as the more orthodox Sūfī community) as a blasphemous personal deification and a mockery of the Sūfī path.*

Such that:

> *In this sense, al-Hallāj's utterance is a purely Dionysian one and simply cannot be properly understood in terms of human language but must be consigned (by the universal) to the realm of madness and transgression.*

Some says al-Hallāj has the "gift of miracles."—among these is his son. He endured a series of long imprisonments. Throughout severe persecutions, al-Hallāj became more spiritually ardent, not repented or compromising his beliefs. Ultimately, he claims Divine authority: God filling him, annihilating his identity: "And it is You who have taken my essence to serve You, as a symbol (among men)…" (37).

"There is thus both a merging and confusing of identities in the mystic/poet's consciousness which is theoretically engulfed in the ultimate reality of the Divine Essence" (Selim 37):

*I am the One I love and the One I love is me*
*We are two souls infused in a (single) body*
*And to see me is to see Him*
*And to see Him is to see us.*

Selim writes,

> *"Linguistically speaking, the "I" of this union, the Hallājian identity, is a nonentity functioning only as a neutral grammatical element, a metaphor for the Divine Essence which engulfs the human essence and which is the One Reality behind the grammatical individuation." (38)*

Al-Hallāj works to clasp this “linguistic paradox” more completely:

> *My present statute (hukm) is that a veil separates me from my own "self". This veil precedes vision (kashf) for me; for, when the moment of vision approaches, the qualifying attributes are annihilated. "I" am separated then from my self; "I" am the simple subject of the verb, no longer myself; my present "I" is no longer me. I am a metaphor (tajawuz), not a generic kinship (tajanus), an apparition (zuhur) not an infusion (hulul) in a material receptacle (haykal juthmani). My survival is not a return to pre- eternity; it is a reality that is imperceptible to the senses and beyond the reach of analogies.*

Successively:

*Ah! I or You? These are two Gods.*
*Far be it for You, far be it for You to assert that there are two.*
*There is only Your One Ipseity in my nothingness, forever.*
*This is my all before All, deceptive, two-faced.*
*Where then is Your essence, apart from me, that I may see clearly....*
*But already my essence is made manifest to the point that there is no more space.*
*And where is Your Face, object of my doubled gaze*
*In the depths of the heart or in the depths of the eye?*
*Between me and You (there lingers) an "it is I" which torments me....*
*So lift with Your I this I from between us both.*

Selim explains al-Hallāj’s work:

> *“It is this obsessive ecstatic celebration of the breakdown of identity in union with God-the tearing aside of the final veil of separation, the "I" -and its linguistic and poetic consequences that is the dominant and most fascinating feature in al-Hallāj's poetry. Here is a true poetry of ecstasy that defies language and all its categories of individuation and separation; a poetry that desperately wrestles with language, tearing it away from the iron grip of Apollo and forcing it to approximate somehow the mysterious experience of supreme spiritual love-in-ecstasy that was hitherto voiceless.”*

In al-Hallāj’s poetry, there is no distinguishes of esotericism and exoteric-ness. He reveals and hides; gives and does not give. He invents a new vernacular that unifies the revealed and hidden. It is “tremendously powerful and yet immeasurably vulnerable in its depth and the directness of its appeal” (Selim 38-39).

*Here am I, here am I, O my secret, O my trust!*
*Here am I, here am I, O my hope, O my meaning!*
*I call to You ... no, it is You who calls me to Yourself.*
*How could I say "it is You" ! if You had not whispered to me "it is I"?*

*O essence of the essence of my existence,—O aim of my intent,*
*O You who make me speak, O You, my utterances,—You, my winks! O All of my all,—O my hearing and my sight,*
*O my assembling, my composition and my parts!*
*O All of my all,—the all of all things, equivocal enigma,*
*It is the all of Your all that I obscure in wanting to express You!*

God is al-Hallāj's essential parts, the sum of these parts, and the very essence of the totality—He is three—He is all. "He *is* the poem itself. "I" and "my" are direct emanations of God. And through defamiliarization and disassociation, "al-Hallāj's poetry, the grammar of ecstasy directly mirrors the ecstatic experience through a contortion or warping or subversion of normal syntactical and expressive patterns." (Silem 39)

*I am not I and I am not He; then who am I and who is He?*
…
*There is nothing in existence but us, I and He and He and He*
…
*I am the One I desire and the One I desire is me*
*There is nothing in the mirror except us two*
…
*"we are two souls infused in one body"*

There is an "existential dizziness" to the way he produces this form of art. Al-Hallāj urges the soul *beyond*, straight to God.

And with the culminating remarks by Semah Selim on Masnūr al-Hallāj:

> *As the ecstatic Dionysian revellers were perceived as a terrifying threat by the prevailing Apollonian culture, so was al-Hallāj, who had unequivocally penetrated into the mysteries of the Divine essence and attempted to draw these forth out of the land of Silence and into the temporal realm of human speech, perceived by his orthodox society as a deadly enemy to be reckoned with in the most extreme manner possible.*

## (Christian) Mystical Prayer

When a soul begins to feel grace, he waxes himself for his sin, remembering the peril of his soul, and calls to God for mercy. He purges himself by contrition, to then feel the great sweetness of the Lord. him. "Then learneth he meekness, dread and love, converting evermore his will and prayer to the will of

God" (147). A sweet stirring love, "suddenly God sendeth into the soul a burning love of desire so fervently that all bodily might faileth and the corrupt body falleth to the earth" (147). He thinks not of joy, nor pain, nor sin, nor heaven, nor hell, but only God. God is all he desires.

> *Other while (at other times), ere the soul is rapt into God he seeketh, at the first kindling, in the streets of heaven amongst saints and angels, (him) whom his soul desireth, not caring for their company and joy, for his mind is not on them, nor on none other thing, as I said before, but only on God. When he has thus sought and found his love, cometh he with a meek and a fervent desire homely to him.*

## "Mystical Poetry in Islam: The Case of Maulana Jalaladdin Rūmī."

I and thou,
With two forms and only one soul…the other
in that land,
Sweet eternal Paradise there….
I and thou

—Rūmī

Annemarie Schimmel's commentary on this verse is that, "Rūmī describes in traditional images complete spiritual union between lover and beloved…and everything created—gardens, birds, stars—participates in amazement." There is an air of paradisiacal bliss in Rūmī's work as a whole.

In Islamic mystical poetry, in which Rūmī is the epicenter, Qur'ānic literary content resounds. The Sūfī are considered, the mystics. As Schimmel asserts, "These sayings condense the experience of Divine Love and Unity and try to guide the disciple into non-logical understanding of the highest mysteries, which *must not* be revealed to the uninitiated" (emphasis added). As we have evidently seen, al-Hallāj reaches a "higher poetical level."

This is Rūmī's "Song of the Reed,"

*Harken to the reed how it complains*
*and how it tells the pan*

The reed is as human soul, apart and out of reach from primordial reedbed, which is the Divine Presence. Rūmī is, completely burning himself in Divine Love, grasping at spiritual peace and equilibrium. Schimmel opines, "the Divine Truth can be expressed only in symbols" (73). Rūmī uses much musical imagery in his writings. In one of his poems, Rūmī has some vision in

which “he sees the Divine Ocean billowing, out of which everything emerges to return into the fathomless sea at the call of the abyss” (Schimmel 75).

Here, he alludes to ice and snow which “bar the freezing soul from its way home until spring, when the Sun enters Aries and the now melts” Moreover the “caravan of souls moves on, and the trees begin to dance, moved by the breeze of Love, and donning the green garments of Paradise which tailor Spring has prepared for them because they have been patient during the hard days of winter; the spring thunder resembles Israfil’s trumpet which calls the dead out of their graves to appear at the resurrection and be granted a new life” (Schimmel 75). His visual effects in his poetry is “limitless.”

A great explanation in this piece on Rūmī is as it follows:

> *“Love is a tax collector who does not leave anything to man, and Love is a consoling mother; Love is alchemy that transforms the copper of human nature into pure gold after purifying it in the heat of the crucible; Love is a dragon that swallows man completely; it appears as a policeman who "hits intellect over the head," or as a creeper that completely covers the tree of human existence; it is a ragman who wants to buy all the old, shabby parts of human life (Rūmī makes Love call, in Turkish, "Who has got old shoes?"), and it is the government official enacting confiscation of all goods; it is a carpenter who builds a ladder to the roof of heaven; it is that which poisons the lover's tears so that sleep dies when approaching his eye.” (Schimmel 77).*

As we saw repeatedly in Vaughan-Lee’s book, “This love (of God) cannot be learned, as the Sufis have always known; rather, it is a gift of grace, a Divine Gift.”

*Not only the thirsty seek the water—*
*the water seeks the thirsty as well.*

Poetry, especially Rūmī’s Sufi poetry, is as a dance, *sama’,* like the whirling dance onto enjoining with God.

## **“Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul: Insights from St. John of the Cross on a Developmental Spirituality.”**

“God who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet He seems sometimes to be present, sometimes absent. I we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to

us when He is absent than when He is present," says Thomas Merton in his *No Man is an Island*. The topic of this section is the 'dark night of the soul' which is when the Spirit privately does transformative work on a human's spirit. The Holy Spirit journeys itself with those human spirits.

John H Coe brings us through a verse by the Apostle John in 1 John 2,

> *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you or His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been rom the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 Jn. 2:12-14)*

In here, there are three developmental stages: spiritual children, spiritual adolescents, and spiritual adults. The first is represented by a 'serving' of *forgiveness of sin* and knowing things about God. This might indicate a spiritual awakening wherein there is a sense of freedom and person-divine relationship: "My sins are forgiven; I know the Father; I have a relationship with God" (Coe 294).

The second stage of spiritual adolescence has plates full of struggle. God's Word is not joyfully assented in but instead "it abides in or is integrated in one's person, with the result of overcoming (current or oncoming) spiritual adversity" (Coe 294).

And spiritual maturity (3) is "the most cryptic of all" John in this scripture is saying that these persons, "fathers (and mothers)" have come to *now* know that they have known Him from *the beginning*. In other words, they have seen—intimately and convincingly—God work *His will* in *their* lives, albeit confusing, maybe even perplexing, at times. The point here is that these spiritual fathers and mothers realize and (work to) accept enthusiastically that *God's* will is the and their central reality. Their maturity requires them to invite this to transpire.

Briefly, the beginning stage of spiritual development (Purgation) is of excitement and joy; the middle (Illumination), wrestling and battling; and the latter (Union, i.e. mystics), spiritual confidence and a walking with the Lord. The preliminary concept of the dark night begun with Augustine to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, primarily in literature, but climaxed with St. John of the Cross in the 16th century.

Now, in purgation the spiritual infant contains the love of God for *pleasure's* sake. God condescends to meet the child where they are in their "habituated need for pleasure." This kind of love or relationship can be likened to an infant-mother attachment in which it is "object oriented" yet, too, characterized by pleasure. The former manner of being where sins were common becomes *intermingled* or *absorbed into* of this spirit's 'God-life.' God, and they as well, must *purge* the believer (themselves) of their spiritual vices—i.e. of the senses.

The first dark night triggers an opportunity for the beginner to move on to Illumination where God is loved, then, for the sake of Love and God—and not for hedonistic product. This stage likens itself to a romance, or more precisely, a marriage, or even child and parent. It just has the passion of a romance and the concomitant intimacy. Eventually, and hopefully, this leads to the second dark night of the soul in which "the soul must be cured even of wanting God for the sake of experiencing mutual love" (Coe 295). Each soul will have to learn to love God for God. God 'demands' to be at the epicenter. The need *to be loved* needs to go out the door in this final stage of Union. An example of this transition phase to the ultimate is Jesus of Nazareth in the Garden of Gethsemane. He experienced sadness, alienation, anguish, and death. As St. Paul said, "he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich." For Jesus, God's will for Him availed his "conscious fellowship with the Father" *and* love of and for God of its own sake.

We will cover Purgation, as the breadth of the dark night in its entirety would violate the requirements, here. As a side-note, this spiritual development theory is not necessarily chronological. It is a growth into greater love. The Spirit works through grace, and differently so for each soul.

*"Apart from Me, you can do nothing"*
*(Jn. 15:5)*

So, faith comes alive in purgation. One might think or say, 'Oh, I feel like a new creature. Meaning, "to have the indwelling Holy Spirit at the core of human personality;" "faith is personally internalized as the prized possession of the possessor (Coe 296). This launches one to experience "zest over faith." God seems ever so relationally nearby, even *within*.

For the Apostle John, these spiritual novices see their faith and their God as an exciting relationship. But, as St. John of the Cross regards it, and as mentioned before, their spirituality is

characterized by pleasure, or the senses. Nevertheless St. John of the Cross states that, "the soul is regenerated," where they "find spiritual milk." God provides spiritual pleasure in replacement for their prior "pre-converted appetite" for pleasure in the finite.

> *"Thus, God gives to the beginner the bottle of spiritual pleasure, without any labor on their part, in much the same way as a parent gives her child a bottle of milk to satisfy his hunger. The truth is that spiritual infants do not as yet have the characterlogical growth to love God with a more mature love. They require spiritual pleasure in their love in order to grow." (296).*

Yet, characterlogically they are still habituated by their "old sin habits" which abides in the mind-body-heart complex. Time and submission will transform this. It's a spiritual death, crafted for union with the Divine.

> *"In general, the unconverted are driven by a profoundly distorted love for self and of pleasure in order to fill that relational void in their deep." Furthermore, "Even pre-converted natural virtues, object attachments, and fortitude that enable unbelievers to postpone gratification are arguably driven and formed by these inordinate loves and pleasures." (296).*

Uncovered (unconverted) spirits are governed by "finite goods of nature such as friends, food, money, family, and education." But once they undergo their 'opening' spiritual metamorphosis, a "new manner of life has begun in the heart (2 Cor. 5:17)" (297).

However, the spiritual disciplines are felt as enriching, this being almost trifling yet understood nonetheless from God's perspective. They *enjoy*. They haven't learnt how to depend on the spirit properly. It will take a slow and painful process of the believer allowing the Spirit to shape them to the image of Christ (Pure Spirit). So, this is why St. John of the Cross urges spiritual babes to develop strong habits in the disciplines that will be never more so needed than during the dark night(s).

Moving onward, the beginner needs to bring his or her characterlogical sins to the surface for transformation; and it'll only be possible through their "conscious cooperation" The reason for this is their character vices has become and infected, invaded, or tainted their spiritual habits.

To be clear, it is *not* the person's responsibility nor capability to be the primary effector of change, here. God's love and grace makes the difference, and in that, the spiritual beginner's lesson is to realize its not them—(deadly spiritual sin/vice: pride). Moreover on this: vices of the heart during pre-conversion now become intertwined with their infantile spirituality. For

example, engaging in spirituality to feel good versus attempting to reach purity and heart-augmentation. This could all turn into 'spiritual luke-warmness,' where the pleasure payoff isn't as it was before and one willfully turns away from the Spirit. But if one reaches this point of spiritual dryness, it is actually a sign that they are ready to proceed in their development.

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> *"He seeks to bring them out of that ignoble kind of love to a higher degree of love or Him, to free them from the ignoble exercises of sense ... and to lead them to a kind of spiritual exercise wherein they can commune with Him more abundantly"*
> *—St. John of the Cross*

The earlier example of a romance and a marriage, well what the Dark Night of the Senses implies is metaphoric of a shifting in the spirituality of the beginner from a romance to a marriage, where the relationship (with God) is carried out and on for the sake of it itself. This is a process in which God works with them, to let go, to trust him more *without pleasure as a tag-along*. They don't look for this consequently, but the sign of their forward movement is humility. God 'implores' in His communications and contacts with the soon-to-not-be spiritual novice that they need to refocus by which *feeling* is *not* a proper measurer of God's involvement and engagement.

St. John of the Cross stresses knowing oneself, to know God—only with God's allowance: "Let me know myself, Lord, and I shall know Thee." John 15:5 teaches that apart from God, one can do nothing (and this is the objective of the first dark night). It builds a greater kind of respect for God—and even oneself, at least spiritually-speaking.

When they [beginners] are going about these spiritual exercises with the greatest delight and pleasure, and when they believe that the sun o Divine favor is shining most brightly upon them, God turns all this light o theirs into darkness, and shuts against them the door and the source or the sweet spiritual water which they were tasting in God whensoever and or as long as they desired . . . And thus He leaves them so completely in the dark that they know not whether to go with their . . . meditation. (St. John o the Cross, 1584/1990, p. 62)

There's just not going to be the same magnifying effect the spiritual child felt in their spirituality and its disciplines. God's presence will no longer be on the basis of spiritual pleasure.

In the dark night, God is the one who temporarily turn away. This maybe you could say is to recharge and make the absence grow the believer's heart more whole, holier, cleaner, and

fonder of God, to then only return, filling the believer with His very presence. "This is a bottom-up spirituality in which the Spirit wants to live his li e *through* and with the believer's own psychological structures and capacities."

The dark night will be one of spiritual confusion and bewilderment. And, according to St. John of the Cross, in equipoise—a middle ground of self-reliance and Spirit-reliance in being filled with God, which the latter works right through our psyche—we find our character's truth: such as, frustration, loneliness, spiritual impotence, etc. We have to be purged of our sensual desire. Being so full of themselves, still in the dark night, the beginner cannot "explicitly experience the Spirit as the Spirit" (Coe 302). Nevertheless, they are being filled by the Spirit to the level where they are at. They can feel trapped; 'Which way do I go?' They can feel "quite guilty and uneasy" about not knowing how to rectify the situation, here in equipoise.

> *"He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present." (Coe 302-303).*

> *"Much wisdom and guidance is required or the beginner in the dark night to avoid spiritual resignation or unhealthy despair in the dark night." (Coe 303).*

*Purgative contemplation* "in prayer and communion within the human spirit to purge the believer of false attachments and the false self" (304) It's a spiritual cleansing.

> *"…in using of the Spirit's hopes, desires, and loves into the believer's psychological structures, pushing the pathological material up from depth so the heart to the conscious level." (304)*
> *Bring it to the cross.*

> *"First, beginners should be open to the act that their spiritual dryness and uneasiness about their disinterest in the spiritual disciplines may be a sign of God working inwardly in a dark night o the senses and not merely the causal result of their own sin." (304)*

This purging, filtering out, is necessary. It all comes down to cooperation on the human spirit's part. The Spirit wants to enter.

Minimal obedience presents "one's body as a spiritual sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2) and as an instrument of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). One has to submit. Remember, humility. "The payoff will be truth, reality, and transformation." God enter the crest of one's horizon of experience. The Spirit rests in the heart, "ministering within its weaknesses and besetting characterlogical

sins." (Coe 305) It's an inward journey. According to St. John of the Cross, the soul will eventually need to "remain in peace and quietness." (Coe 305): "peaceful and loving attentiveness toward God" and nothing else (i.e. non-attachment). One could conclude that *in time* knowing and a felt presence will surface, and ever so more fully.

> *"God is now leading them by another road, which is that of contemplation…." (St. John of the Cross, 1584/1990, p.70)"*

## **"BEYOND REACH OF LANGUAGE: KEVIN HART AND CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM."**

As we conclude our last section with some mystical Christian poetics, Toby Davidson opines: "One must *attend*, through faith and love, to an imageless God." (272). This is to *accompany* God, to *go with* Him, *stay* and *watch* Him as his beloved companion. St. John of the Cross talks about a waiting in silence, surrounding the soul, in a calming state. Philippians 3:13 goes as, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." What else is relevant to as part of the preface is about stretching, *attendere*. Kevin Hart, the subject of this concluding part, interviewed to say, "'Poems open themselves to the unknown by attending to and caring for the known.'"

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*"…Christ's arms outstretched, ready to dive 'In this cold ocean/With its lost treasure/Its gorgeous fish, all blind as jewels, Gliding through the darkness."*

These are Western Christian mystical motifs of rivers joining with seas or journeys upon the ocean, thus "signifying the soul's absorption in God."

*You find me as the ocean receives a stream widening*
*Beyond itself, becoming the beaten foam, a rain*
*... And so I find you, both then and now; I am within you*
*Always, as within the whole of language; always, as*
*The universe forever forms itself…*

———————

*"You come so suddenly, as something long forgotten,/taking me over completely"*

Hart's eroticism is one that is between lover and Beloved—eros to be read as mystical union. It is to a point where there is a "blur with the Divine."

*With flowers and emeralds*
*gathered on cold mornings*
*we shall weave garlands*
*flowering in your love*
*and bound with one hair of mine.*
*That single hair of mine*
*waving on my neck has caught your eye;*
*you gazed upon my neck,*
*and by it captive you were held*
*and one of my eyes has wounded you.*

—St. John of the Cross, "The Spiritual Canticle"

*"Waiting,* tends towards absence"—it tends toward a kind of asceticism.

'Prayer,' the final poem in *Flame Tree: Selected Poems* by Kevin Hart:

O come, in any way you want,
... Come as you used to, years ago,
When I first fell…

The last word in the last line, to close out the poem, 'fell,' is a pun, and gets at "the human desire for reunion with the divine from its fallen state." *The Spiritual Canticle* goes as: 'Reveal your presence/and may the vision of your beauty be my death.' There are tropes of yearning, desire, and longing.

There's a mysterious "companioned waiting, an abiding with the soul," in the following two 'Soul Says' poems:

*Soul says well let us watch the old night sky*
*Until the darkness gazes back:*
*... The sound you heard above your head was me Soul says*
*And for a moment I was almost free:*
*Now let us go*
*Now you have felt the darkness gazing back*

*('Soul Says [1]')*

*Come children, now—*
*Your ear and eye and mind, you others too— I say,*
*Come and be gathered in a word*
*.. .That feels the blank beyond what words can bear (Poor word, soul says,*
*That lets the sunlight through)*

*... One day, soul says,*
*One day, I say,*
*One day*
*The eye and mind will listen, and abide*

Silence here can seem like a kind of food. A hunger for the Beloved.

"Some Nights I Walk the Streets When I Can't Sleep" is an exemplar of "corporeal, ecological and theological *stretching*:

*Some nights I walk the streets when I can't sleep*
*But what I want is never there to see:*
*I know the streetlights like to stretch my bones,*
*I know the universe is moving fast.*
*There's nowhere that I really want to go:*
*The truth is just as hard in my own house,*
*The grass puts down its roots right where I live.*
*And when at last I reach the river bend*
*I tell myself, as though I were a child, God is the dark before the shadows came.*

Death assumes its own *stretching*, and even shrinking, as we see with Hart's 'Snow' —

*I turn off every light And watch the snow*
*Enjoy the dark, moving lushly*
*Through spiky air,*
*Finding more time*
*In time*
*That when I stretch myself*
*And am*
*My father's father. Oh yes, There is*
*A sparkling choir, there surely is,*
*And dark ice air*
*Through which we fall*

Hart cites: "we stretch forward endlessly into God throughout eternity" (277).

In his 'The Room,' the subject waits *and* stretches:

*It is my house, and yet one room is*
*The dark has taken root on all four walls.*
*It is a room where knots stare out from wood,*
*A room that turns its back on the whole house.*
*At night I hear the crickets list their griefs*
*And let an ancient peace come into me.*

*Sleep intercepts my prayer, and in the dark*
*The house turns slowly round its one closed room.*

'Covenant' is published in Hart's The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse:

*Dark one, light one, dark as the heart of a flame,*
*If you can't speak in silence, practise your art*
*Be a pillar of fire or a pillar of smoke, or the small*
*Voice of a mountain pouring in sand through an hourglass...*
*Bright one, dark one, speak to us out of our silence.*

'Colloquies' is as if it's a prayer:

*There are no words,*
*Dark One, no words at al*
*Just these black marks*
*These stretched and knotted*
*sounds*
*So you must come*
*And brood upon my page*
*And warm those words*
*Until fine cracks appear*
*I talk to you*
*And all my words black out*
*You talk to me*
*In words like morning snow*
*There are no words,*
*Dark One, no words at all*
*I read your book*
*But you compose in white*

There is the ineffable presence of God… the "language of paradox" that we see in all of the above poets. The mystic-poet wants to run away from the worldly and toward and with the Divine in eternity and bliss.

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